Aristasia

...The Great Escape ?

by Polly More

Polly is getting nervous sitting in the office. Funny how the mind is drawn to the macabre: images of serious, unreserved corporal punishment prevail. Illusionary projection clouds the vision, not good when visiting unusual situations when it is best to keep an open mind, take a deep breath and plunge. Holding my nose I return to the Aristasian Embassy to visit Miss Martindale, the official face of this distant land.

Aristasia is another world – television, today's radio programmes and current newspapers are amongst the things you will not find here, nor much evidence of 1996 in general. As far as is possible everything – furniture, clothing, objects, etc will be from the past. A sub-dialect, with coded words also exists besides "Good English", to further distinguish their world from ours ("Bongo", "Pit", "Pette" etc.) Miss Martindale (Miss M.) along with a group of other women have been constructing and living in this all-women hierarchy for over 16 years. (Men may visit occasionally but cannot experience what women can).

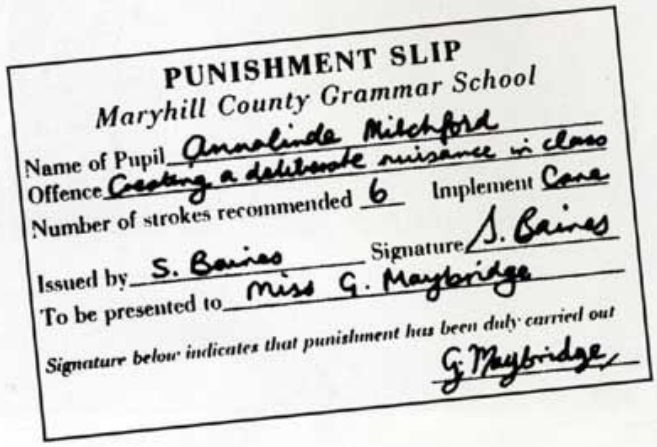
Aristasia, a familiar sounding word (Aristasia/Fantasia) is the umbrella term for the "provinces" (historical zones) including *Vintesse* – the 1920's, *Trent* – the 1930's and other un-dated more ancient regions such as *Amazonia* which together form the fabric of Aristasia. It is up to and no later than the late 1950's (*Quirinelle*) that Aristasia exists (pre-eclipse).

I have been reading *Children of the Void* by Miss Regina Snow: "*The astonishing true-life novel of women who created an all female world of glamour and discipline*", the latest in a series of Aristasian novels published by Wildfire Publications. Other commercial Aristasian ventures include, to name but a few, the sale of traditional fully fashioned seamed stockings (which wrinkle enigmatically around the ankle) a range of lingerie and high quality Malayan rattan canes.

The book is an unusual mixture of styles – a very specific fundamentalist matriarchal philosophy, a wash of fact and fiction and some very detailed (skin-smarting and bottom-tingling) descriptions of the effect of harshly treated, soft female flesh.

Aristasia is not geographically bound, but spans from London to the South West of England as far as France and even America (via the World Wide Web). It is more a "chain" with a set of rules which link the various centres. In theory anywhere can be Aristasia with the devotion and dedication required to create it.

Arriving at the Embassy as arranged, Miss M. isn't yet ready. A voice emanating from the letterbox directs me to the garden where I wait. I admire the impressive quantity of empty wine bottles in the broken green house and the relaxed atmosphere of the garden. Everything takes longer in Aristasia. The contemporary rush is replaced by a supine calm and "sophisticated" pace which either encourages patience or provokes fury. Summoned, I travel the distance from garden to door, yet notice that Miss M. takes noticeably longer despite the relative distances. What mystery slows



PUNISHMENT SLIP

Maryhill County Grammar School

Name of Pupil Annalinda Milchford

Offence Creating a deliberate nuisance in class

Number of strokes recommended 6 Implement Cane

Issued by S. Baines Signature S. Baines

To be presented to Miss G. Maybridge

Signature below indicates that punishment has been duly carried out

G. Maybridge

the pace in the inner sanctum?

I am often surprised just how much someone's physical presence affects the way they appear to be. The Miss M. who greets me today seems quite different from the upright disciplinarian of my first visit. Then, she wore a severely dark fitted dress nipped at the waist with a tight patent leather belt, hair drawn back into a sleek and elegant coiffure, eyes topped with charcoal grey and a pair of horn rimmed spectacles upon her powdered cheek emphasising the severity of wickedly red lipstick.

Today, in our one-to-one meeting, she wears a long and flowing evening dress in demerara sugar brown, with red stilettos, pearl jewellery and hair worn long, loosely tied in a black bow. The fabric of the dress discloses the regulation Aristasian uniform of stockings and suspenders, the little tension curve evident at the top of her thigh. My eye is pleased by the fluidity of the fabric and how it enhances the body. It is a celebration of the female form and she looks splendid, other-worldly. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of me. Looking me up and down she points a trained finger at the armchair where a long velvet skirt has been placed for my immediate wear. Trousers are not worn by women here, it is not feminine.

The calm is momentarily broken by this fiery outburst, caused by my insensitivity. She threatens to propel me out of the door. Smoothing out the situation, I discard the levis, don the skirt and looking somewhat ungainly we continue. Miss M. is a very charming, intelligent and enigmatic woman who one is immediately drawn to. Her strength of character and self confidence are alluring qualities.

The darkened living room is carefully constructed, from the persian carpets to the frosted glass lamps which emanate a suitably soft light. The room resembles a period set from a museum, elegant if some what eclectic. The curtains, velvet, are always closed here, to block out any interference from the "*Pit*", and presumably keep all Aristasian energy pure (it takes years to purify a previously tainted household).

Conversations being fuelled by the interests of the two parties, we discuss dance and magic, ritual, purification, spirituality, companionship and healing to name but a few. Aristasia is a smelting pot where the wholesome and the rather more piquant co-exist.

The young brunette, Edwina, the School Ma'am Miss Martindale, the schoolgirl Heather Win-Sarah, Embassadress Lady Trent are but a few of the many characters you may encounter here. One would assume that a gargantuan household would be necessary to house this group of women. How do they all co-habit ? You will never see them in the same room together, you will probably not get the same reaction from any of them on a

PHOTOS BY NIC PERCY

given subject. However there is a marked similarity between them. You will soon realise that part of the life of an Aristasian is to construct and enact a range of different personae. The amount and variation of these rely on the individuals ability to multiply yet pay no particular attention to chronological age, shape or size. As would befit a lady near the top of this feminine hierarchy, Miss Martindale has many personae, an expanding body of girls. All of these though will fit into either one of the two indigenous sexes: "blondes"- (ultra feminine, soft, fluffy, submissive, girly); "brunettes" (feminine, intelligent, forthright, assertive). Actual hair-colour is irrelevant, but all are "*superior to the masculine*". Today I encounter Edwina, a young brunette – wise, excitable, warm and expressive.

Transformation here is a re-occurring theme as it is in many sub cultures. Spaces, ie. rooms, gardens, passages as well as people all see their fair share of changes. When is a dining room not a dining room? When it's a cinema. When is a Mistress not a Mistress? When she is a maid. There is a remarkable creativity lavished on the possibilities of one thing which has the potential to become another.

Part of the current fascination for Aristasia stems from the similarities inherent in other escapist worlds notably the S & M world. The spanking, personal transformation and fantasy element as well as exclusionary rulings and suggestion of lesbianism all add to the intrigue. Excluding the occasional pinch, squeeze, stroke or kiss this is a "Chaste" environment where sensuality, not sexuality prevail. Despite the rules this is far more than a polite girls' club.

Most of the recent press coverage about Aristasia has concentrated on the corporal punishment that is administered on a regular basis. This is an integral part of what is on offer to women here, and is seen as a purification means and return to "essential discipline"

"Unable to help herself, Annalinde, pinioned firmly by the hands, twisted her legs as if to avoid the pain, opening her suspender-crossed thighs in the most ungainly manner. Aunt Alice deftly brought down the hard brush in agonising reproof to the niece's exposed inner thighs. Annalinde squealed like a wounded animal and closed her legs demurely as her only means of protecting this most delicate place of feminine modesty. For the rest of the spanking her legs remained neatly side by side, despite the mounting pain in her bottom and thighs. Even so, that burning soreness would make walking a delicate task next day, as her inner thighs rubbed together... beneath the folds of her skirt".

Spanking provides part of the "hard edged" regulating discipline, which is seen to be lacking in the outside world where chaos abounds - "*in the pit they have been taught to feed their souls on poison – on a culture that makes them cynical and discontented, that cheapens and dirties everything, most of all themselves*".

Punishment given by a superior is not a "Silly Monkey" (Sado Masochist) game for those seeking "sensual gratification", but a serious business.

"Genuine discipline and true submission require true authority".

There are no safe words, sub/dom interchangeability or obvious sexual content (all seen as facile). Instead, "*what is right for the individual charge*" is administered with "*love, in the name of the higher law*". Apparently a cleansing and detoxifying experience. Miss M never gives out what she herself has not received.

Miss M. is keen for all girls to feel welcome, telephone the Embassy in the first instance, to find out whether or not you are

ready to benefit from the experience.

A visit might include School Lessons, Maid Service, A Lick of the Cane or even visits to the in-house *"Park Place"* Odeon, or the *"Constant Nymph Club"*. Contact with previously lost or inexperienced parts of the self will play a vital part of your stay as will meeting some of the extraordinary inhabitants and enjoying the sophisticated lifestyle.

Despite the more civilised aspects of Aristasian life there is more than a passing similarity to some other fundamentalist religions and organisations who trawl for recruits amongst the lost and the searching. In adhering to a formal structure one can abdicate personal responsibility. Yet where does this ultimately leave us? Sure, the strong and the intelligent may well get a lot out of Aristasia, but what of the unquestioning, the malleable, or the plain fucked-up?

The book outlines a rigid life definition giving specific rulings regarding correct thinking and acceptable behaviour:

"You cannot pick or choose what Aristasian discipline you will accept, or decide when you think you have ceased to enjoy punishment".

It's the whole thing or let it be the Aristasian death of you!

In talking with Miss M. it is clear that her intentions are pure and good. She is undoubtedly an advanced spiritual being with firm beliefs about channelling the will and way of the Greater God(dess).

Even after three separate visits I am left with mixed thoughts and feelings regarding Aristasia. Bitter-sweet. Suck it and see ? ●

Call Miss Martindale at the Aristasian Embassy on 0181 989 0281

All quotes are taken from *'Children of The Void'*, published by Wildfire Publications. See listings for comprehensive info regarding all things Artistasian.

Glossary of Terms:

Bongo - An inhabitant of the Pit, particularly one deeply affected by the ethos of the Pit.

Eclipse - The cultural and spiritual collapse of the early 1960s. Civilisation proper ended at this time and the Void (or the Pit) took its place.

Pit - The psychotic anti-feminine world outside Aristasia, created by the Eclipse.

Pette - A jaunty and ultra-feminine Aristasian girl.

Real World - Everything outside the Pit, not only Aristasia but the world before the Eclipse.